

Approaches to SLA: Classroom Applications



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Behaviorist Theory

- Popular in the 1950's
- Based on stimulus-response-reward
- Learning environment provides stimulus
- Learner provides responses
- Language is acquired by imitation

Issues for Educators

- This theory does not take into account the latest research on SLA.
- No weight is given to outside factors affecting our students.
- Culture and native language are not given status as being important to language learning.



Innatist Theory

- Chomsky proposes that every child is born with Language Acquisition Device (LAD).
- Universal Grammar: Assumes grammar concepts are innate to everyone.
- Follows the idea learners absorb the info about language around them. L2 acquisition is subconscious.

Implications for Educators

- Provide a language-rich environment giving ample opportunities for input for the ELL.
- Exposing ELLs to a variety materials in the L2 will allow them to acquire the language.



Interactivist Theory

- L2 acquisition revolves around meaningful two-way exchanges.
- Interactions between students and their teachers and other peers form the bulk of L2 input.

Implications for Educators

- Don't just lecture! Allow your students to practice conversations with each other.
- Give feedback to ELLs on their errors.
- Model correct language forms.
- Social interactions should be part of the classroom environment.



Age Factor

Critical Period Hypothesis:

Age at which language acquisition is optimal

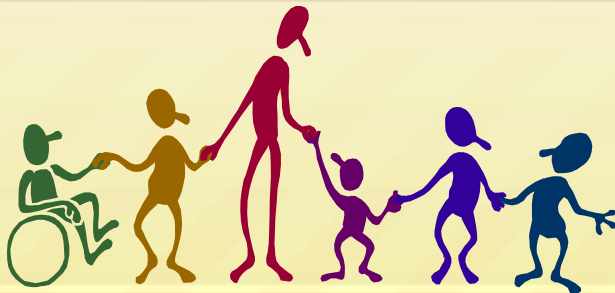
- Critical Learning Period (CLP) is between 2-12 years.
- L2 acquisition beyond CLP may further affect pronunciation.
- Native-like accent may be impossible after CLP.
- May not affect ability to acquire vocabulary.

Implications for Educators

- Elementary Educators are reaching ELLs during Critical Learning Period.
- Work with ELLs as much as possible to help them make gains in the CLP.
- Regular Ed and ESL teachers need to work together so this time period is not wasted!



WE ARE A TEAM!





Other Critical Factors: Issues Impacting SLA

Critical Factors	Questions for Educators
Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How similar is English to the L1?2. How proficient is the ELL in the native language?3. Are general attitudes about the L1 positive?
Learner	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are the needs of the ELL?2. What level of home support does the ELL have?3. Does the ELL have positive role models?4. Is the ELL intrinsically motivated? What are the ELL's goals?
Learning Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the ELL's learning style?2. Is the ELL given meaningful opportunities for communication in English?

Tips for Teachers



- Encourage parents to continue to speak to, read with and teach their children in the native language! Using L1 at home = higher quality interactions with parents/children.
- Find a way to show your students you appreciate their heritage and their native language.
- Just like with all students, try to find ways to engage your ELLs and find out which learning styles work for them.
- Use variety in your teaching including meaningful conversations, video, audio, visual-based learning, and Internet activities

Best Approach for My Students: Combination of Innatist and Interactivist

PreK Environment

- Play based learning environment
- Interactivist approaches work well in the PreK classroom because the children have two-way conversations in the TL during play.
- Small group settings encourage conversations and feedback from teachers to students.
- ELLs have great opportunities to listen to the play of native speakers. They are able to absorb and acquire the L2 as suggested in the innatist theory through this input.



My Favorite Approach

Innatist Approach

- ELLs will take all inputs and use LAD and UG to acquire language.
- Conversation based learning associated with interactivist approaches are still valid for innatist because the communication becomes an input.
- Even my students who converse almost entirely in Spanish and are quiet at all other times seem able to speak a fair amount of English at the end of the year. This has been without the same number of two-way conversations as other students, and therefore, suggests to me an innatist approach.



Resources on SLA

English Language Game Ideas:

<http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/games.htm>

Foreign Language Acquisition

<http://web.ncyu.edu.tw/~jennykuo/Course/SLA/SLATheories.pdf>

Fostering Language Acquisition in Daycare settings

[http://www.bernardvanleer.org/Fostering language acquisition in daycare settings What does the research tell us?pubnr=628&download=1](http://www.bernardvanleer.org/Fostering_language_acquisition_in_daycare_settings_What_does_the_research_tell_us?pubnr=628&download=1)

Models and Theories that Explain L2/FL Acquisition

<http://www4.ujaen.es/~gluque/TOPIC5.pdf>

Second language acquisition (SLA) research: its significance for learning and teaching issues

<http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/421>

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